

Ernie Fletcher  
Governor



LaJuana S. Wilcher  
Secretary

Commonwealth of Kentucky  
**Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet**  
**Public Service Commission**  
211 Sower Blvd.  
P.O. Box 615  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40602-0615  
Telephone: (502) 564-3940  
Fax: (502) 564-3460

Contact: Andrew Melnykovich  
(502) 564-3940 x208  
(502) 330-5981 (cell)

## **CONSUMER INFORMATION COLUMN FROM THE KENTUCKY PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION REGARDING PHONE SLAMMING**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 22, 2004) - The following is a consumer information column from the Kentucky Public Service Commission. It may be used immediately, with authorship credited as indicated.

# Protect Yourself Against Phone Slamming

**By Mark David Goss, Chairman & Ellen Williams, Vice Chairman**

## **Kentucky Public Service Commission**

No industry has changed more in the last decade or two than telecommunications.

Restructuring has ended monopolies and brought competition for both local and long-distance telephone service.

New technologies – notably fiber optics, mobile phones and the Internet – have given consumers an incredible variety of communication options.

The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) believes these changes and innovations have been good for consumers. They have given all of us the ability to communicate better and more efficiently, both at home and at work or school.

But the number of choices consumers now have - in providers, type of service and rate plans - can be overwhelming and confusing. Choosing among them can be difficult.

Unfortunately, a few telephone marketers or providers take advantage of this complexity to take advantage of consumers. Those unscrupulous few often engage in an illegal practice known as “slamming.”

Slamming is the unauthorized switching of a consumer’s local or long-distance telephone service from one provider to another. It is often done by getting consumers to accept misleading offers of refunds or rebates, sign misleading forms or rebate checks, or answer deceptive surveys.

If you believe that you have been slammed, you should first attempt to contact the company to demand that they restore your original service and refund any payments you have made to them. You also should notify your authorized local and long-distance carriers and ask to be reinstated.

If the slamming company won’t resolve your complaint, then contact the PSC.

The PSC’s Consumer Services Division staff will attempt to help you settle the issue with the phone company. The PSC also may investigate consumer complaints and take action against companies that are found to have engaged in slamming. Penalties can include large fines and, in cases of repeat offenders, a ban on doing business in Kentucky.

Consumers can protect themselves from slamming in several ways:

- Examine your telephone bill carefully for charges for unauthorized services.
- Beware of prize materials, contest entries and, in particular, promotional checks from telephone companies. By cashing the check, you may be authorizing the switching of your phone service.
- Be careful when talking to telemarketers. Do not give out personal information. If you are interested in a company’s service, ask them to mail you the information.

**-more-**

More information about slamming, as well as about other telecommunication issues, is available on the Consumer Information portion of the PSC's Web site, at [psc.ky.gov](http://psc.ky.gov). Complaints can be filed directly from the Web site.

Consumers also can contact the PSC's Consumer Services Division by calling toll-free to 800-772-4636, or by writing the PSC at 211 Sower Boulevard, Frankfort, KY 40602.

The telecommunications industry will continue to change as markets and technologies evolve. Whatever those changes, the PSC will continue to promote open and robust competition and ensure that consumers are treated fairly.

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